SIR ROBERT PEEL'S PORTRAIT-GALLERY AT DRAYTON MANOR.*

(DESIGNED BY MR. SYDNEY SMIRKE, F.S.A.)

ON THE HAGIOSCOPE AND OTHER PARTS OF ALDERTON CHURCH, WILTS.

BY JAMES THOMSON, M.R.I.A.

It is remarkable that there should exist no early historical record of Alderton Church, Wilts, as there are strong indications that it must have been one of the most ancient ecclesiastical structures to be met with in an English *village*.

I say *village* because I would not venture to extend my observation beyond that limit. I use it in contradistinction to those which exist in towns and cities, where it frequently happens that erections are made of a more massive and enduring character than are to be found in villages.

With respect to the village in which it is situate, I beg to quote the words of our justly celebrated antiquary, John Britton, who in his "Beauties of England and Wales," published A.D. 1814, thus refers to it:*

"Alderton, or Aldrington, is a village and parish situated to the westward of the Fosse-way,† on the confines of this county with Gloucestershire.

According to the Parliament returns of 1811, the parish contained twenty-nine houses and 153 inhabitants. This manor belonged for upwards of three hundred years to the family of the *Gores*, several of whom were knights or persons of distinction. The old manor-house, *which is still standing*,‡ is situated to the north of the village church, and is now the property of a family named Hedges.

Thomas Gore, an antiquary, and a political writer of considerable note in the seventeenth century, was born at the manor-house of this village, in the year 1631, and received the early part of his education at Tetbury, in Gloucestershire. In 1647 he removed to Magdalen College, Oxford, and afterwards went to London, and entered himself a member of the society of Lincoln's Inn. He soon, however, quitted the metropolis, and retired to his patrimonial estate at Alderton, where he followed the bent of his inclination by devoting his attention to the study of *antiquities and heraldry*. In the latter branch of knowledge, indeed, he became one of the greatest proficients of his age, and published several works on the subject written in Latin. Among these was 'A Catalogue of the Writers on Heraldry, with a Prefatory Discourse of Arms and Armoury,' which was first published in London in 1668, and again at Oxford in 1674. Mr. Gore, being considered a man of talent, influence, and property, was nominated high sheriff of his native county for

* See p. 217, in present No.

* Vol. xv., p. 2.

† This Fosse-way is one of the Roman roads which pass through Wiltshire, being a branch of the *Julia Strata*, extending from Bockford, is continued through Hannerdown, Easton Grey, across the turnpike-road between Tetbury and Malmsbury to Cirencester.

‡ That was in 1814; it is now entirely gone.

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